

A Very Simple Survey of the Old Testament

Block #4 — Lessons 25–32

Block #4 • Lessons 25–32 | Keith R. Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Block

Block #4 covers Exodus 11 through Numbers 25 — from Israel's physical exodus out of Egypt to their encampment at the borders of the promised land. Across 8 lessons (with Part 1 and Part 2 sections treated individually for detailed study) Keith R. Blades traces a single, sustained doctrinal theme: Israel had to learn “the hard way” that she was not great in herself, but only as great as God's mercy and grace made her to be. The block opens with the climactic tenth plague and the Red Sea crossing, moves through God's four-fold wilderness schooling of Israel, and arrives at Mt. Sinai where the Law contract is formally ratified. The special emphasis of Lesson 28 on Leviticus 26's five courses of contracted punishment — identified throughout this series as the single most important key to understanding the entire Old Testament — makes this block a doctrinal turning point in the curriculum. The remaining lessons trace Israel's immediate and repeated failure under the Law, the testimony of the tabernacle, and the activities of Satan's policy of evil on the borders of the promised land.

Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Title — Scripture Reference
Lesson 25	Through the Red Sea — Exodus 11–15
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Lesson 32	The Story of Balaam — Numbers 22–25

Lesson Summaries

L25

Through the Red Sea *Exodus 11–15 • The Exodus and the Destruction of Egypt’s Army*

- The tenth and final plague: the slaying of Egypt’s firstborn — the crushing blow to their gods, as the firstborn were “the chief of their strength” and the glory of their idolatrous religion (Ps. 78:51)
- Israel departs from Egypt with “great substance” exactly as God had declared to Abraham (Gen. 15:14) — all the things God promised to Abraham concerning his seed are now in the process of being fulfilled

The Crossing of the Red Sea

- God orchestrates one more mighty work: Israel’s backs are against the Red Sea with Egypt’s army bearing down — an apparently hopeless predicament designed by God to manifest His power as their Deliverer and Avenger
- “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD” (Ex. 14:13) — Moses’ declaration that the LORD will fight for them; the Red Sea parts, Israel crosses on dry ground, and the Egyptian armies are destroyed
- Moses and Israel’s victory song (Ex. 15:1–19): celebrating God as “a man of war” and singing of going to the LORD’s land to establish His kingdom on the earth
- Application: Israel perceives itself ready and great, but it is only great in number — not yet great in the LORD. The next several lessons will school Israel in this critical distinction

L26

Food from Heaven *Exodus 16 • God’s Special Four-Fold Schooling of Israel (Part 1)*

- Israel’s fear of the LORD and belief in Him after the Red Sea crossing (Ex. 14:31) was real but shallow — they still had not learned that they were totally dependent upon the LORD for everything
- God deliberately takes Israel through four trials designed to “prove” them and manifest the truth: they are not good by nature, they do not merit God’s blessing, and their only hope is God’s mercy and grace

Trial 1 — No Water at Marah (Exodus 15:22–26)

- Bitter waters; Israel murmurs against Moses instead of crying to the LORD — God sweetens the waters by a tree; establishes the “proving test”: “If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God...” (Ex. 15:26)

Trial 2 — No Food in the Wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16)

- Israel murmurs again within days of God’s provision at Marah; God provides quails and manna from heaven — but with two simple commands about gathering; Israel breaks both commands, proving she is not good by nature
- “How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?” (Ex. 16:28) — the proving test has begun; two lessons remain to complete it

L27

When Water Flowed from a Rock *Exodus 17 • God’s Special Four-Fold Schooling of Israel (Part 2)*

Trial 3 — No Water at Rephidim (Exodus 17:1–7)

- A duplicate situation to Marah — Israel murmurs yet again and “tempts the LORD”, saying “Is the LORD among us, or not?": the place named Massah (temptation) and Meribah (striving) as a permanent memorial to their failure
- Contrast with Joseph: Joseph, who went through far greater trials, trusted God’s faithfulness implicitly and never complained — Israel has not yet learned what Joseph demonstrated

Trial 4 — Amalek Attacks (Exodus 17:8–16)

- Amalek comes against Israel — Israel cannot prevail on her own strength; only when Moses lifts up “the rod of God” does Israel prevail, and when his hands drop, Amalek prevails: a vivid demonstration that Israel’s strength to overcome every enemy lies entirely in the LORD
- Aaron and Hur hold up Moses’ hands until sunset and Joshua defeats Amalek — God’s complete victory
- Conclusion of the schooling: through four trials God proved that Israel is not naturally good, not naturally obedient, not a ready servant, and not one who merits God’s blessing — her only hope is God’s mercy and grace

L28a

God’s Ten Rules (Part 1) *Exodus 19–20 • Israel Enters the Law Contract*

- Israel arrives at Mt. Sinai: having failed God’s schooling, the question is whether they learned the lessons or not; God presents the conditional proposition — “If ye will obey my voice indeed... ye shall be a kingdom of priests and an holy nation” (Ex. 19:5–6)
- If Israel had learned her lessons she should have confessed her total inability to “obey His voice indeed, and keep His covenant” — the trials had already proven she could not and would not naturally do so
- “All that the LORD hath spoken we will do” (Ex. 19:8) — the “high hand” with which Israel came out of Egypt still exists; she enters a contract with God in which her welfare depends on her own performance

The True Purpose of the Law

- The Law was NOT given to teach people how to be saved by living good lives — it was given because Israel failed to learn by previous lessons that she could not merit God’s favor by her works
- The Law was designed to teach Israel “the hard way” through its harsh demands and penalties: “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20); the Law “worketh wrath” (Rom. 4:15); it is a “ministration of death” and “ministration of condemnation” (II Cor. 3:7, 9)

The Ten Commandments as the Tenor of the Law

- God’s appearance on Sinai was terrifying: thunderings, lightnings, consuming fire — because Israel had contracted to match her conduct with God’s Holiness and Righteousness
- The Ten Commandments are not the whole Law but the “tenor” of it (Ex. 34:27) — all 700+ commands amplify these ten; they represent the substance of the entire legal agreement and are enough to manifest any person’s sinfulness

L28b

God’s Ten Rules (Part 2) *Leviticus 26 • The Five Courses of Contracted Punishment*

- Leviticus 26 is the special section of the Law setting forth the contracted blessings and punishments — it tells Israel’s history in advance and is an outline of the rest of the Old Testament

The Contracted Blessings (Lev. 26:3–13)

- If Israel kept the Law: marvelously productive land with perfect growing seasons and no lack of food; perfect peace with no enemy bothering them; successful removal of enemies from before them; God dwelling and walking among them

The Five Courses of Contracted Punishment (Lev. 26:14ff)

- Course 1 (vv. 14–17): Illnesses and diseases; enemies raid and take their food; defeat in battle; ruled over by enemies in constant fear
 - Course 2 (vv. 18–20): Judgment upon weather; labor in vain to raise crops; famines and distress in the land
 - Course 3 (vv. 21–22): Wild beasts afflict them; personal loss of family members and livestock; commerce and trade affected
 - Course 4 (vv. 23–26): Invading enemies take possession of their land; siege of cities; starvation and disease; losing their land
 - Course 5 (vv. 27–33): Destructive judgments; destroyed from off their land; taken captive; cities and land destroyed; scattered among the nations and ill-treated
- These five courses of punishment are the single most important key to understanding and appreciating the Old Testament — they tell us what to expect in Israel’s history before we read it
 - Because Israel was not able to keep the Law, the description of the punishments actually outlines Israel’s history in advance — every major event from Joshua through the Gospels fits within this framework

L29a

The Golden Calf (Part 1) *Exodus 32 • Israel’s Sinfulness Exposed Beyond Anything to This Point*

- God called Moses up to Mt. Sinai for forty days to receive the tables of stone and the full details of the Law contract — meanwhile, the visible glory of the LORD burned on top of the mountain for all Israel to see (Ex. 24:17)
- Within forty days of officially ratifying the Law contract — while God’s glory is still visibly manifest — Israel gathers to Aaron and says “Up, make us gods, which shall go before us” (Ex. 32:1): they deny the LORD’s existence and credit Moses with bringing them out of Egypt

The Depth of Israel’s Sinfulness

- Even Aaron, who had just come down from seeing God on the mountain (Ex. 24:9–11), goes along with the people: he constructs the golden calf, builds an altar to it, calls the idol “Jehovah,” and leads Israel into indecencies and fornication
- Against the background of their solemn agreement, the ceremony of ratification, and the visible presence of God — this action is utterly incredible; the only explanation is the sinfulness of their nature, which they refuse to acknowledge
- This demonstration manifests beyond anything else to this point that Israel is not good by nature, not righteous, not holy, not deserving of God’s blessings, and not fit to be utilized by God in His plan and purpose
- Israel’s only hope: she is a nation of hopeless and helpless ungodly sinners who desperately need God to be merciful and gracious, or they are doomed

to His condemnation and wrath forever

L29b

The Golden Calf (Part 2) *Exodus 33–34 • God’s Mercy Proclaimed as Israel’s Only Hope*

- God’s initial response: He declared to Moses His right to let His wrath “wax hot” against His “stiffnecked people” — provoking Moses to realize that wrath is all Israel deserves, and she is doomed if there is nothing in God Himself to provide otherwise

Moses Manifests Israel’s Sinfulness to Them

- Moses breaks the tables of stone — physically depicting what Israel had effectually done; forces the people to “taste the bitterness” of their sin; reprimands Aaron; orders execution of the defiantly rebellious
- God moves the tabernacle “without the camp, afar off” — declaring that what Israel deserved by her works was for God to move away from them, not to dwell among them

God Proclaims His Name — Israel’s Only Hope (Exodus 34:5–9)

- God calls Moses back to Sinai and descends in a cloud to “proclaim the name of the LORD”: “The LORD, The LORD God, MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS, LONGSUFFERING, AND ABUNDANT IN GOODNESS AND TRUTH, KEEPING MERCY FOR THOUSANDS, FORGIVING INIQUITY AND TRANSGRESSION AND SIN” (Ex. 34:6–7)
- Moses bows in worship and appeals to God to go among this stiffnecked people and pardon their iniquity — recognizing that Israel’s only hope is not her own goodness, but God’s mercy and grace alone
- God resumes His dealings with Israel as if nothing happened — solely because of who and what He is in His “Jehovah-ness”; the Law contract is re-inscribed on new tables of stone

L30a

Building God’s House (Part 1) *Exodus 25–27 • God’s House Was a House With Meaning*

- God designs the tabernacle Himself and gives Moses the precise blueprints — “According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle... even so shall ye make it” (Ex. 25:9); it is not just a house but a “house with meaning” built as a teaching device under the Law contract

The Layout: Court, Holy Place, and Holiest of All

- The tabernacle proper (approx. 45×15 ft) stood within a larger court enclosure (approx. 150×75 ft); two rooms inside: the holy place (larger) and the holiest of all (most holy place), separated by a veil
- The holiest of all was the specific place where God said He would dwell — but it was closed off by a “veil of separation” with cherubim woven into it, guarding God’s presence just as cherubim guarded the tree of life after Adam and Eve’s fall

The Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat (Exodus 25:10–22)

- The “ark” is literally a coffin — God had Israel build a casket for the Law contract, testifying that what Israel merits on her own under the Law is death and condemnation; placed in the very room where God dwells
- The mercy seat (pure gold, with two cherubim on either end, wings stretched

forth, faces looking toward one another) covering the ark testifies to Israel's only hope: through the death of another in their place (blood sprinkled on the mercy seat), their sins can be covered and God can receive them

- The unique structure and furnishings together communicate: Israel is not welcome in God's presence because of the problem of sin, but in God's mercy is her remedy

L30b

Building God's House (Part 2) *Exodus 25–40 • The Tabernacle's Message: "You Are NOT Welcome"*

- The tabernacle did not have a "welcome mat" at its door — its structure, furnishings, and activities were all designed to make Israel feel she was NOT welcome in God's presence because a problem existed: the problem of sin

The Structure Declares Separation

- The veil of separation served as a "NOT WELCOME" mat; the whole tabernacle proper was closed off; the cherubim in the veil forbid and prevented Israel from entering God's presence, just as they prevented Adam and Eve from re-entering the garden

The Furnishings Testify to Sin and Grace

- The ark of the covenant (a coffin for the Law) testified that what Israel deserved was death and condemnation; the mercy seat testified that on the sole basis of God's mercy and grace, through the death of another in their place, sins could be covered and God could receive them

The Activities Underscore the Same Truth

- Only designated priests could function in the tabernacle area; even they could not enter the holiest of all — only the High Priest, once a year, and only with the blood of an animal sacrifice on the mercy seat
- The continuous daily sacrifices at the altar (Ex. 29:38–46) from morning to night testified that for God to receive Israel there was the necessity of the death of ones in their place on account of their sins
- The tabernacle was truly a "tent of witness" — bearing constant testimony to Israel's sinful state: God was off limits to her because of sin, but in Him and His mercy and grace was the help she needed

L31a

Moses Makes a Mistake (Part 1) *Numbers 11–14 • Israel's Persistent Rebelliousness Before Entering the Land*

- Before Israel even entered the land, she demonstrated on at least ten occasions that she was not "great in the LORD" — the book of Numbers records a history of persistent rebelliousness

Complaining on the March (Numbers 11:1)

- The very first verse of Israel's journeying: the people complained about what the LORD was doing — God's anger kindled and His fire consumed those in the uttermost parts of the camp

Longing for Egypt Over the Manna (Numbers 11:4–20)

- Israel despised the LORD's miraculous provision and wished they were back in Egypt for its food — "Ye have despised the LORD which is among you... saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?" (Num. 11:20); God provided meat

but judged those who ate in continued rebellion

Aaron and Miriam Against Moses (Numbers 12)

- Even Aaron and Miriam rebelled against God's established leadership; Miriam was plagued with leprosy; Moses, being "great in the LORD," appealed to God's mercy and she was healed

The Climax: Israel Refuses to Enter the Land (Numbers 13–14)

- Ten spies report the inhabitants are too strong; only Caleb and Joshua are "great in the LORD": "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" — the nation prepares to stone them and return to Egypt
- God's judgment: the entire generation of fighting men to wander forty years in the wilderness and die — "All those men which have seen my glory... and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice" (Num. 14:22–23)

L31b

Moses Makes a Mistake (Part 2) *Numbers 14–20 • Forty Years of Wandering and Moses' Failure at the Rock*

- Even after God's severe judgment, the people attempt to go into the land in their own strength without the LORD — "they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp" (Num. 14:44); they are defeated by the Amalekites and Canaanites
- Their grief was not based on genuine conviction over failing God, but on disappointment over what they were missing — stubbornly thinking they were "great in themselves" rather than learning to be "great in the LORD"

Korah's Revolt (Numbers 16)

- Korah and his company challenged God's choosing of Moses and Aaron; God judged them decisively, yet even then the people attempted to carry out the same revolt — further evidence Israel was still not "great in the LORD"

Moses' Failure at the Rock (Numbers 20)

- After forty years of God's faithful provision ("thou hast lacked nothing" — Deut. 2:7), the new generation arrives at the desert of Zin: no water — a perfect duplicate situation to prove Israel is "great in the LORD"; instead, they murmur and complain just as before
- God tells Moses to take the rod but only "speak unto the rock" — instead Moses rebukes the people and strikes the rock twice: Moses himself failed to be "great in the LORD" at this critical moment
- God still provides the water out of His grace, but Moses is disqualified from entering the land — the consistent lesson: Israel's only hope is God's "Jehovah-ness" and grace, even for her greatest servant

L32

The Story of Balaam *Numbers 22–25 • Satan's Policy of Evil at the Borders of the Land*

- Israel arrives at the borders of the land of Canaan — ready at last to begin the conquest of Satan's headquarters for his dominion over the earth; God has claimed this land for Himself and given it to Abraham's seed
- Satan's policy of evil responds: Balak king of Moab, in whose land Israel is encamped, consults with the elders of Midian and devises a plan to bring a

curse upon Israel through the prophet Balaam

God Overrides Balaam's Curses

- God intervenes directly: Balaam cannot curse what God has blessed — every attempt to curse Israel is turned by God into a blessing; Balak's plan fails completely because God is for Israel
- Balaam's prophecies of blessing (Num. 23–24) include a remarkable declaration of the coming Star and Scepter out of Israel — a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ's eventual rule as Messiah

Satan Shifts His Strategy (Numbers 25)

- When direct cursing fails, Balaam counsels Balak to use Moabite women to entice Israel into fornication and idolatry at Baal-peor — Satan's policy of evil pivots from external opposition to corruption from within
- This lesson underscores the doctrinal theme running through all of Hebrews through Revelation: the satanic policy of evil against God's people does not cease, but takes multiple forms — both external opposition and internal corruption

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Israel Was Not Great by Nature — Only by God's Mercy and Grace

The central doctrinal message of Block #4 is that Israel was not by nature a good, fit, or ready people for God's use. Though great in number, she was not "great in the LORD." God's special schooling through four wilderness trials (Exodus 15–17), the Law contract itself (Exodus 19–20), the golden calf incident (Exodus 32–34), and the persistent rebellions of Numbers all served one purpose: to manifest to Israel that her only hope of ever being God's "holy nation and kingdom of priests" lay in God Himself being merciful, gracious, longsuffering, and forgiving (Ex. 34:6–7). Until Israel learned this, she could not be what God's covenanted plan and purpose called for.

The Purpose of the Law Was to Condemn, Not to Save

The Law was not given to Israel as a means of being saved or of meriting God's favor. God gave Israel the Law because they insisted on contracting with Him to be dealt with on the basis of their own performance ("All that the LORD hath spoken we will do"). God's design for the Law was to teach Israel "the hard way" what they refused to learn from His special schooling: that they were sinners by nature who could not keep God's Law. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). The Law was a "ministration of condemnation" (II Corinthians 3:9) designed to drive Israel to realize that God's mercy and grace was their only hope.

Leviticus 26 — The Key to the Entire Old Testament

The section of the Law contract setting forth the five courses of contracted punishment in Leviticus 26 is the single most important passage for understanding and appreciating the Old Testament record. This passage tells Israel's history in advance — what would happen to her if (and when) she failed to keep the Law. When the five courses of punishment are understood, the entire historical record from Joshua

through the Gospels ceases to be a disconnected collection of stories and becomes a crystal-clear testimony of God dealing with His nation in exactly the manner He contracted with her. Every major event — the judges, the kings, the captivities, the prophets, the coming of Messiah — fits within this framework.

The Tabernacle Was God's Tent of Witness — Not Simply a Place of Worship

The tabernacle was designed by God as a “house with meaning” — a teaching device whose every feature communicated a specific message to Israel. Its structure, furnishings, and daily activities all declared the same truth: Israel was not welcome in God's presence because of sin. The veil of separation, the guarding cherubim, the restricted priesthood, the ark of the covenant (a coffin for the Law), the mercy seat, and the continuous sacrifices all worked together to testify to Israel's sinfulness and God's grace as her only remedy. The tabernacle was not primarily a place of comfort and welcome, but a “tent of witness” bearing constant testimony to the problem between Israel and God and pointing to the mercy that alone could resolve it.

Satan's Policy of Evil Against God's Nation

Block #4 concludes with the story of Balaam, which introduces the consistent theme of Satan's active opposition to God's plan and purpose with Israel. With the nations of Canaan in his hands and Israel about to begin the conquest of the land he controlled, Satan mobilized Balak and Midian to bring a curse upon Israel through Balaam. When that failed, he shifted to the strategy of corruption from within through fornication and idolatry at Baal-peor. This pattern — external opposition followed by internal corruption — is the consistent character of the satanic policy of evil against God's people throughout Israel's history and is developed extensively in Hebrews through Revelation.

Key Scripture References

Genesis 15:13–16	God's declaration to Abraham: his seed would sojourn in Egypt and leave with great substance — fulfilled in the Exodus
Exodus 14:13–14	“Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD” — Moses' declaration before the Red Sea
Exodus 15:1–19	Moses and Israel's victory song: celebrating God as a man of war and anticipating the kingdom in the land
Exodus 15:26	The “proving test”: God's conditional statement to begin manifesting Israel's true nature under trial
Exodus 16:20, 27	Israel breaks the two commands about manna: the proving test demonstrating their natural disobedience
Exodus 17:9–13	The rod of God lifted up in battle with Amalek: Israel's strength lies in God alone, not in herself
Exodus 19:3–8	God's conditional proposition and Israel's response: “All that the LORD hath spoken we will do”

Exodus 24:17	The visible glory of the LORD as a devouring fire on top of Sinai — in the eyes of the children of Israel for forty days
Leviticus 26	The five courses of contracted punishment — the historical outline of Israel’s future written in advance
Exodus 32:1–6	The golden calf: within forty days of the Law contract, Israel’s natural sinfulness fully exposed
Exodus 34:6–7	God proclaims His name to Moses: “Merciful and gracious, longsuffering, forgiving iniquity” — Israel’s only hope
Exodus 25:8–9	God’s command to build the tabernacle exactly according to His pattern — a house with meaning
Exodus 25:17–22	The ark of the covenant and the mercy seat: the tabernacle’s core testimony to sin and grace
Numbers 11:20	“Ye have despised the LORD which is among you” — Israel’s persistent rebelliousness in the wilderness
Numbers 13–14	The ten spies’ report; Israel’s refusal to enter the land; forty years of wilderness judgment
Numbers 14:22–23	God’s declaration: Israel has tempted Him “these ten times” — the rebellious generation excluded from the land
Numbers 14:44–45	Israel presumes to enter the land without the LORD — defeated by Amalekites and Canaanites
Numbers 20:7–12	Moses strikes the rock twice instead of speaking to it — disqualified from entering the promised land
Numbers 23–24	Balaam’s prophecies of blessing over Israel; the Star and Scepter out of Israel (Num. 24:17) pointing to Messiah
Romans 3:20	Paul’s declaration of the Law’s purpose: “by the law is the knowledge of sin”
Romans 4:15	“The law worketh wrath” — confirming the designed function of the Law with Israel
II Corinthians 3:7, 9	The Law as “ministration of death” and “ministration of condemnation” — its designed function
Deuteronomy 2:7	“These forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing” — God’s faithful provision

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